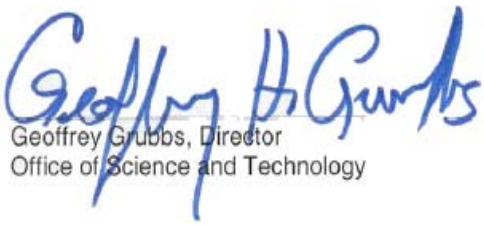
Foreword

We are pleased to release the 2002 ***Summary of Biological Assessment Programs and Biocriteria Development for States, Tribes, Territories, and Interstate Commissions: Streams and Wadeable Rivers.*** This summary, a joint project by the Office of Water and the Office of Environmental Information, provides an abundance of technical and programmatic information which illustrates the progress States, Tribes, Territories and Interstate Commissions are making in the utilization of biological assessments and criteria in their water programs.

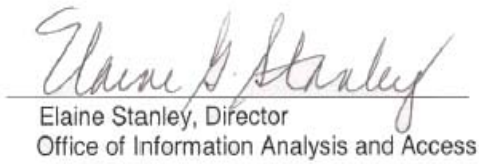
Biological assessments and criteria are crucial tools for measuring the health of water bodies and for protecting aquatic life. Biological assessments evaluate the condition of a water body using surveys and other direct measurements of aquatic life—aquatic vegetation and algae, fish, insects, crayfish, salamanders, frogs, worms, snails, mussels, etc. Biological criteria are numeric or narrative targets that can be set to define the desired biological condition of a water body and can even be adopted into State and Tribal water quality standards. In combination with other available water quality tools, such as chemical pollutant criteria, the use of biological assessments and criteria give States, Tribes and Interstate Commissions better tools than ever before for restoring and maintaining the quality of our Nation's water bodies.

The progress made by the States, Tribes and Interstate Commissions as reported in this Summary is impressive. Since our previous assessments in 1995 and 1989, significant progress has been made by virtually every State and an increasing number of Tribes and Interstate Commissions. Biological assessments and criteria are in the mainstream of water management programs throughout the Country. More States than ever before are using biological criteria in their water quality programs as definitive standards.

We encourage you to take time to review this Summary to appreciate the progress that is being made. The information in the report is valuable to assess the progress of one program relative to other programs across the country. In addition, it may be possible to learn of new and different ways to employ biological assessments and criteria by better understanding what others have done. This Summary is another example of the value of public access to information and data. EPA firmly believes that analysis of and access to such information is the key to better environmental decision making. And lastly, since every State, Tribe and Interstate Commission reported in the Summary helped assemble the information, we thank you for your help and participation.



Geoffrey Grubbs, Director
Office of Science and Technology



Elaine Stanley, Director
Office of Information Analysis and Access